

Amid simmering crisis over sexual assault charges

Nancy Pelosi endorses Biden

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On Monday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi formally endorsed Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic Party candidate in the 2020 presidential election. In an eleven-minute video, Pelosi lavished praise on the pro-war, pro-corporate long-time senator and vice president under Barack Obama, the most right-wing of the major contestants for the nomination.

Pelosi called the 77-year-old, semi-senile political hack a “voice of reason” in the coronavirus crisis and absurdly described him as “a leader who is the personification of hope and courage, values and integrity.” In the midst of the greatest corporate bailout in world history, she specifically praised Biden for his role in the multi-trillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street during the 2008–2009 financial crisis.

Pelosi’s endorsement followed endorsements earlier this month by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, marking the line-up of the so-called “progressive” wing of the party behind the candidate of the party apparatus, whose official imprimatur was signaled by the endorsement the same week by Barack Obama.

But the unity at the top has not resolved the party’s deep crisis. Biden is despised by broad sections of the working class and especially youth and younger workers, and there are many indications that large sections of those, especially young people, who supported the Sanders campaign may not accede to Sanders’ post-capitulation demand that they vote for Biden.

Their disquiet has been increased by the news last week that Biden’s chief economic adviser is Larry Summers, a key architect from the 1990s to the present of the policies of deregulation and economic parasitism that have enabled the financial aristocracy to monopolize ever greater portions of society’s wealth.

This has been compounded by a simmering scandal involving allegations of sexual abuse against Biden by Tara Reade, a one-time staffer in Biden’s Senate office, who filed a complaint with Washington DC police in March accusing the then-senator from Delaware of having assaulted her in 1993.

The alleged incident occurred 26 years ago, there were no other witnesses, Reade did not file a complaint with the police at the time, and the statute of limitations has long since expired. Biden himself has said nothing, but his campaign has denied the charges.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has no way of knowing whether Reade’s allegations are true. One thing is clear, however. The response of the Democratic Party and media organizations aligned with it, such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, which have spearheaded the #MeToo witch hunt and reveled in the “take down” of dozens of prominent men on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations of sexual misconduct, has exposed their rank hypocrisy.

The *Times* and the *Post* failed to report Reade’s allegations for weeks after the story was broken by Sanders supporter Katie Halper on her podcast in March. In mid-April they posted articles emphasizing inconsistencies in Reade’s story and insisting that it had to be carefully examined and Biden given the presumption of innocence before reaching any conclusion as to his guilt.

The Democratic National Committee has said nothing, nor has Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Sanders, Warren or most of the dozen or so women on Biden’s short list for his vice presidential running mate. Pelosi has spoken publicly only once on the matter, telling MSNBC on April 17 that she was “satisfied” with Biden’s denial. She appeared Sunday on CNN’s “State of the Union” program and was not asked by moderator Jake Tapper about the issue.

The contrast between the treatment of Biden by the Democratic Party and the pro-Democratic media and the treatment of a host of targets of #MeToo sex charges could not be more blatant. The mantra “believe women” that was proclaimed repeatedly, including by Biden himself during the September 2018 Senate confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, has been supplanted by a sudden (dishonest) affirmation of the democratic principles of due process and the presumption of innocence.

What has been exposed is the role of the #MeToo campaign as an adjunct of the Democratic Party. Its proponents have changed their tune because the McCarthyite methods of #MeToo in this particular case cut across the interests of the Democratic Party and substantial sections of the ruling class that are backing Biden in the contest with Trump.

There are, however, forces aligned with the Democratic Party that are pushing Reade's allegations and calling out the party apparatus for seeking to quash them. The *Intercept* has published a number of articles as have some pseudo-left Sanders promoters, including *Jacobin* magazine.

This opposition has increased since the posting Friday by Newsbusters of a video clip from an August 1993 CNN "Larry King Live" program in which a woman, identified by Reade as her mother, calls in and cites the case of her daughter, who was "working for a prominent senator and could not get through with her problems at all." The caller does not identify the senator and does not mention sexual harassment, but the clip seems to confirm Reade's claim that she told her mother of the incident with Biden at the time.

The video has been widely reported by Fox News and other right-wing media, but largely suppressed by the rest of the corporate media.

Fox News reported Monday that the hashtag #dropoutbiden was trending on Twitter on Sunday, until it was allegedly removed. Nick Brana, Sanders' former national outreach coordinator, tweeted over the weekend that the Democratic National Committee should either force Biden to drop out or "admit that suppressing progressives is the true purpose of your party."

Another former Sanders senior adviser, Winnie Wong, tweeted: "The video of Tara Reade's late mother calling into Larry King to blow the whistle about Tara's sexual assault is being met with relative silence from a cadre of progressives right now and I want you all to know that I see you. We all do."

Within this context, Pelosi's abrupt endorsement of Biden appears to be an effort to contain and silence the voices calling for him to step aside and make explicit the party's demand that the matter be dropped. Pelosi's video appears to be part of a circling of the wagons around Biden.

On Monday, the co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Representative Pramila Jayapal (Democrat from Washington state), endorsed Biden, after having served as the Sanders campaign's national chair for health policy. Biden was the most strident opponent of Sanders' call for "Medicare for all" during the primary contest, repeatedly denouncing it on the grounds that it would cost several trillion dollars. Of course, both he and Sanders are now

supporting a bailout of the corporate-financial elite that has already reached some \$10 trillion.

"I am ready to work with him [Biden] to craft and then implement the most progressive agenda of any candidate in history," Jayapal said in a statement.

Her endorsement followed that of two other former Sanders campaign officials. The Progressive Congressional Caucus's other co-chair, Mark Pocan of Wisconsin, endorsed Biden last week, as did Representative Ro Khanna of California. Pocan and Khanna served as co-chairmen for Sanders.

There is nothing progressive in the efforts of disaffected Democrats and their pseudo-left allies to dislodge Biden on the basis of unsubstantiated sex allegations. Even assuming that Reade is telling the truth, in which case Biden should be held to account, the fact is that Biden and his party are guilty of far greater crimes.

The wars Biden supported in Afghanistan and Iraq alone killed hundreds of thousands of people, including women and children. The Obama administration, in which Biden served as second-in-command, made drone assassination a major instrument of US foreign policy, asserting the right to murder US citizens and carrying out the assassination of at least three Americans. In 2010, Biden himself declared persecuted journalist Julian Assange to be a "hi-tech terrorist."

It is not a question of replacing Biden with some other servant of American imperialism and Wall Street and promoting the middle class politics of racial and gender identity. The crisis requires the mobilization of the mass of workers, who are increasingly fighting back against the return-to-work campaign of both big business parties, and behind them all genuinely progressive elements in the middle class, on the basis of a revolutionary socialist program in opposition to the entire two-party system and the ruling class it defends.



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